

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 NEA-10 SAJ-01 SAB-01 SAM-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 NSCE-00

OMB-01 ACDA-19 NIC-01 DRC-01 ARA-16 /199 W

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R 170416Z APR 74

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1661

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0636

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CH UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET DCM POINTEDLY SILENT ON MIDDLE EAST

1. LAST EVENING AT DINNER GIVEN BY EGYPTIAN CHARGE, SOVIET DCM BRESHNEV STEERED JENKINS ASIDE FOR PRIVATE CONVERSATION. LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF THE CHINESE INTERNAL SCENE RESULTED IN NEARLY CONGRUENT APPRAISAL, IN TERMS FAMILIAR FROM OUR REPORTING. A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF CAMBODIA CAME TO AN AMICABLE SHRUG-OF-THE-SHOULDERS CONCLUSION.

2. JENKINS THEN ASKED BRESHNEV WHETHER HE THOUGHT A SATISFACTORY DENOUEMENT TO THE MIDDLE EAST COMPLEXITIES COULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT. BRESHNEV FIRST SHOT A DISAPPROVING GLANCE, NEXT STARED AT THE RUG WITH A BEMUSED (OR SARDONIC?) SMILE FOR A LENGTH OF TIME SEEMINGLY DESIGNED TO BE DRAMATIC, THEN WITHOUT A WORD ON THE MIDDLE EAST CHANGED THE SUBJECT TO A PURELY PERSONAL ONE, POINTEDLY AS TO CONSTITUTE A REPRIMAND FOR THE SUBJECT'S HAVING BEEN RAISED.

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3. COMMENT: THIS DEPARTMENT IS MOST UNCHARACTERISTIC

OF BRESHNEV, WHO PREVIOUSLY HAS BEEN UNFAILINGLY POLITE, EVEN IN INSTANCES OF STRONG DISAGREEMENT. IT IS RISKY TO TRY TO INTERPRET A NON-VERBALIZED, IF OSTENTATIOUS, DISPLAY OF WHAT SEEMED TO BE CONTROLLED IRE. JENKINS COULD NOT AVOID THE IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, THAT BRESHNEV'S HAM-ACTED SILENCE, WITH SMILE, WAS MEANT TO INFORM THAT HE REPRESENTED NOT A RESIGNED LOSER IN THE MIDDLE EAST BUT A DETERMINED PLANNER COGNIZANT OF STRENGTH WHICH WOULD YET BE TRANSLATED IN SOME FORM. AT ANY RATE, HIS ACT WAS EXECUTED WITH A HYPERCONFIDENT PANACHE WHICH PROBABLY NO SOVIET OFFICIAL IN TIME OF CRISIS COULD HAVE CONVINCINGLY MUSTERED VIS-A-VIS AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL A FEW YEARS AGO, SAY, AT THE TIME OF THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS.

4. REQUEST FOR BI: BRESHNEV HAS SUCH AN AIR OF AUTHORITY WE WONDER HOW WELL CONNECTED HE MAY BE IN THE SOVIET HIERARCHY. WE HAVE LITTLE BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON HIM HERE, AND WOULD WELCOME CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DEPARTMENT OR MOSCOW.
BRUCE

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